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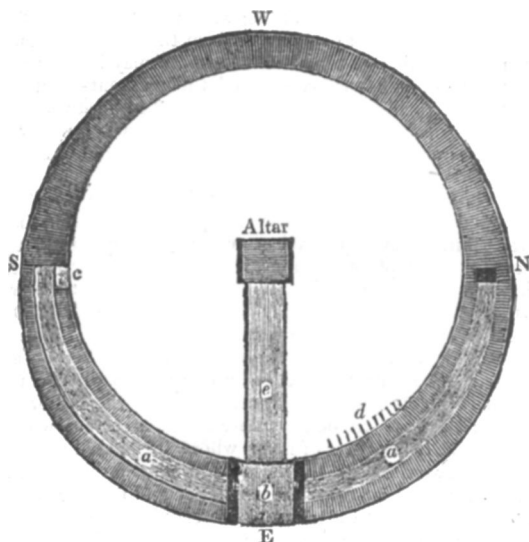
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Athlone sends one member to Parliament. It gives title of Earl to the Dutch family of Ginckle, as a reward for the services performed by the General of that name in the year 1691. It is the station of a large military force and numerous staff. Lines have also been thrown up on the bank of the Shannon; but, though they might serve to protect the place in the event of any sudden popular commotion, they could oppose no effectual barrier to a regular force. There is a celebrated chalybeate spring in the vicinity.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF AN ANCIENT BUILDING, SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN A TEMPLE OF THE SUN, ON GREENAN MOUNTAIN, DONEGAL.



SKETCH PLAN OF GREENAN TEMPLE.

- a. The two passages in the wall.
- b. The entrance.
- c. Communication from the south passage into the area.
- d. The stairs leading to the top of the wall.
- e. Flagged passage to the altar.

Londonderry, December, 1634.

SIR—In the account of Burt Castle, No. 64, Vol. II. of your interesting miscellany, there is a brief allusion to a Temple of the Sun on Greenan mountain in that neighbourhood. The ingenious author of that very accurate account, was not aware, I am sure, of the existence of a very particular and minute description of that highly interesting remnant of antiquity, written by a very elegant scholar and gentleman of much antiquarian research, particularly in matters connected with Ireland, Colonel Blacker. The detail is given in a letter addressed to that very respected prelate, the Hon. Dr. Knox, the late bishop of this diocese. A few copies only were printed, for private circulation among the friends of the writer. One of these I was fortunate enough to procure; and considering it well suited to the purposes of your Journal, request your acceptance of it, and remain, your obedient servant,

G. H.

To the Editor of the Dublin Penny Journal.

My Lord—If your antiquarian research keeps pace with your taste in modern improvements, I know of none to whom I could with greater propriety address the following observations. But however this may be, your Lordship has an official claim to priority of information on the subject of any ecclesiastical remains discovered within the range of your diocese.

The epithet "ecclesiastical" may sound strange when applied to scenes of Pagan adoration; but your Lordship cannot but be aware that it is made use of by Giraldus

Cambrensis, when speaking of those round towers, which, together with the Arenæ of sun-worship (one of which I am about to describe), serve to establish, in my humble opinion, the Eastern origin and habits of Ireland's early inhabitants.

The mountain of Greenan, in the county of Donegal, rises from the southern shore of Lough Swilly, immediately in rear of the island of Inch, from which it is separated by a channel of no great breadth, and, in one part, passable at low water for cattle, &c. The ascent, for about a mile, is tolerably gradual, till, within a few hundred yards of the summit, it, as it were, starts up somewhat precipitously into a circular apex of many acres in extent, crowned by the pile which I have just mentioned my intention of attempting a description of.

That this spot was, in former days, consecrated to the purposes of sun-worship, is sufficiently evident from its name: Greenan, or, more correctly, Grian-an, signifying, literally, "the place of the sun," or "appertaining to the sun."

To the casual observer, the first appearance of the edifice is that of a truncated cairn of extraordinary dimensions; but, on a closer inspection, particularly since the clearing away of fallen stones, &c. which took place under my directions, in May last, it will be found a building, constructed with every attention to masonic regularity, both in design and workmanship. A circular wall, of considerable thickness, encloses an area of eighty-two feet in diameter. Judging from the number of stones which have fallen on every side, so as to form, in fact, a sloping glacis of ten or twelve feet broad all round it, this wall must have been of considerable height—probably from ten to twelve feet—but its thickness varies: that portion of it, extending from north to south, and embracing the western half of the circle, being but ten or eleven feet, whereas, in the corresponding, or eastern half, the thickness increases to sixteen or seventeen, particularly at the entrance. To discover this entrance was one of the first objects of my attention, and having directed a clearance to be made as nearly due east as possible, a passage was found, in breadth about four feet, flagged at the bottom with flat stones, equal in width to the opening itself, and fitted with great regularity: this passage was covered with flags of very large dimensions, which, however, we found fallen in; the main lintel, on the inner side, was formed of a single stone, six feet three inches in length, and averaging fourteen inches square in thickness. Within the wall, to the right and left of this entrance (though not communicating with it), are carried two curious passages, about two feet wide by four in height, neatly covered at top with flags, in the same manner as the entrance. These passages extend through half the circumference of the building, terminating at the northern and southern points: that running southward was found to communicate with the area, or interior of the place, by an aperture extremely disproportioned to the passage itself, being merely wide enough to permit the entrance of a boy; this aperture is due south, and the passage, as it approaches the eastern part of the building, becomes gradually narrow, being not more than six inches wide at its termination, adjoining the entrance. The approach to that gallery or passage, wending northward, appears to have been from above, there being no signs of an aperture communicating with the area, as in the case of the other passage just mentioned; whereas, on clearing away the fallen stones, to the northward of the main entrance within the building, we discovered a staircase, eighteen inches wide, leading from the level of the area to the top of the wall, very similar to those shown in the model of the Staig Fort, near Kenmare, to be seen in the museum of the Dublin Society. This passage extends to the northern point, but, differing from the other, it carries its breadth the entire way. On either side of the entrance passage, a few feet within, appears a square niche, or what masons would call a double reveal, of four inches deep: at first sight it seemed as if they had been the entrances to the two passages already mentioned, and which had been for some cause built up, but on examination this was found not to be the case; they were evidently formed at the original building of the wall, and I am inclined to think may have served for the

purpose of enabling those within to close the passage from above by means of something in the nature of a portcullis. From a careful examination of the wall, in different places throughout its circumference, it appears to have been parapeted, the space between the parapet and the interior of the circle being (as was usual in amphitheatres) allotted to spectators, and accessible by the stair-case already noticed. In the centre of the area are the remains of the altar, or place of sacrifice, approached from the entrance of the building by a flagged pathway, which was discovered on raising the turf by which it is overgrown: around these are the ruins of a square building, but of comparatively modern construction—in fact, the place was resorted to by the Roman Catholics in the vicinity, for the purposes of worship, until some forty years back, when a small chapel for their accommodation was erected at the foot of the mountain—a certain proof of the traditional sanctity of the spot. It is a well known fact, that the early propagators of Christianity in Ireland were too wise, too good judges of human nature, to expect that men could be induced all at once, and without the possibility of relapse, to abandon forms, to desert, perhaps to destroy fanes hallowed to them, however mistakenly, by a thousand en-dearing associations: instead, therefore, of insisting upon, or attempting to accomplish anything of the kind, they retained the place of worship, while they changed the object of adoration. Hence we see the Christian Church and the symbol of atonement reared beside the tower of the Guebre. The fane of Baal became the temple of Jehovah. The Milcom of the Ammonite, the Ashtoreth of the Sidonian, gave place to the St. Columb and the Madonna of the Catholic; and for many an age the sacred fire continued to burn unquenched, for a Christian vesta, in St. Bridget of Kildare! The change extended from the hill and the altar to the valley and the fountain, and the poor devotee who tells his beads at the holy well of Fahan, or of Malin, little dreams that his Pagan ancestor held the same spring in equal reverence, under a different name and tutelage. Surely, my Lord, it is not unreasonable to conclude that a place of worship, so considerable as Greenan appears to have been, must have come in for its re-consecration, and continued more or less in the odour of sanctity, until the period I have mentioned.

The stones of which the building is formed are of the common grey schistus, but evidently selected with considerable attention as to size; and considering their exposure to the Atlantic storms for so many centuries, the decomposition is wonderfully small. In those parts of the wall which have been protected by the accumulation of the debris from above, the chiselling is yet sharp and the squareness perfect. The circumstance of its being a stone building adds considerably to the antiquarian interest which Greenan is calculated to excite; for, with the exception of the Staig Fort above mentioned, I am not aware of any other similar edifice being discovered in Ireland. Places of Sun-worship abound. Among the most remarkable may be instanced the Moat of Granard (or Grian-ard, the eminence of the sun), in Longford; and Greenmount (or Grian-mont, the mount of the sun), in Louth: the latter of which, situated as it is, close adjoining the most frequented road in Ireland, is passed daily, hourly, by travellers and tourists of all sorts, without exciting an observation. The virtuoso who will "compass sea and land" to see a few mouldering pillars, once sacred to Jupiter and Minerva, traverses the great Belfast road, wholly unconscious that he is passing almost within the shadow of one of the most perfect remains of Pagan sun-worship which this, or perhaps any other country in Europe exhibits. But both of these, as well as others of a minor description, are mounds (stupendous ones, certainly) of earth. Any that are of stone are, in point of architectural pretension, little beyond the ordinary cairn; nor do they appear to aim at a higher designation. One of the principal, I believe, exists in Antrim, at no great distance from Templepatrick, and is known by the name of Cairn Graney, or "the cairn of the sun."

I was a good deal surprised to find that the very existence of this building was unknown to so many of my acquaintances in Derry, which it stands within four miles of—and some of whom are persons of research and much

historical information; still more was that feeling excited by learning that it had (as far as I have been able to discover) escaped the particular observation of the surveying officers of engineers, who had actually a station on the walls of it: to be sure trigonometrical accuracy is one thing, and antiquarian lore another. In this respect, however, it has only shared the fate of numberless objects of curiosity and interest with which the county of Donegal abounds, but which have remained unexplored, or at least undescribed, until very lately, when my friend, the Rev. C. Otway, gave to the world his highly interesting, as well as delightfully written "Sketches" of some portion of the scenery around Kilmacrenan—to the fidelity of which, in a descriptive point of view, I am enabled to bear the fullest testimony. I sincerely wish he had crossed the Swilly to Greenan.

But, to return from this digression, it only remains to be mentioned, that the building was encircled by a double foss, the first about twenty yards from the wall, the second at a like distance beyond the first—both may be distinctly traced throughout the entire of their extent—and the visitor can hardly fail to observe that the turf between the building and the first foss is remarkable for the superiority of its verdure over any portion of the surrounding mountain grass lands.

Such, my Lord, is Greenan—a visit to which is of easy accomplishment, and will well repay the exertion; for, even putting Antiquarianism out of the question, the view from the place, on a clear day, is one of the finest that can be imagined. The boundless Atlantic—the grand estuaries of Foyle and Swilly—the Alpine scenery of Donegal, from Barnesmore to Birdstown—the basalt cliffs of Magilligan, and a large portion of Derry and Tyrone, are all placed beneath the eye, as in one vast map. To this may be added an additional gratification, if the visitor has the good fortune to be acquainted with a certain worthy friend and connection of mine, whose hospitable mansion lies embowered near the base of the mountain and to whom I am indebted for the assistance and facilities which have enabled me to attempt the foregoing description.

I have the honour to remain your Lordship's very obedient servant,

W. B.

Carrick, June, 1880.

#### ACCOUNT OF SOME SUBTERRANEAN CHAMBERS DISCOVERED NEAR CARRIGTOHILL, COUNTY OF CORK, AND AT BALLYHENDON, NEAR FERMOY, IN THE SAME COUNTY.

"Admiralty, 31st January, 1835.

"SIR,—In compliance with the wish expressed by T. G. in No. 127 of the Dublin Penny Journal, for information respecting the circular entrenchments, termed Danish Forts, so numerous in the South of Ireland, I beg leave to transmit to you a copy of a communication on this subject, made a few years since to the Society of Antiquaries, and which you are at liberty to send to your correspondent, or reprint in your Journal.

"With every good wish for the success of your publication, I remain, Sir, your very humble servant,

"T. CROFTON CROKER."

To the Editor of the Dublin Penny Journal.

Barnes, Surrey, Dec. 15, 1829.

My dear Sir,—When at Cork, in the early part of the present year, I was informed that some subterranean chambers had been recently discovered on a farm named Garranes, in the parish of Carrigtohill, about nine miles east of that city.

By the kindness of Mr. Cummins, the proprietor of the ground, I was afforded an opportunity of examining these chambers, in company with Mr. Robert O Callaghan Newenham, whose pencil has so skilfully illustrated the picturesque antiquities of Ireland. They are situated within one of those circular entrenchments, popularly (but I am inclined to think incorrectly) termed "Danish Forts." The diameter of this entrenchment is one hundred and twenty feet; and at the third of that space from the south side appeared a circular pit, about seven feet in depth, and measuring five feet and a half in diameter.